



CEPPS/NDI Final Report

ROMANIA: SUPPORT TO THE ROMANIAN PRESIDENCY

**USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 186-A-00-05-00102-00, under the Leader
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I. SUMMARY

In 2004, Traian Basescu, head of the Democratic Party (PD), won the presidential election in Romania as part of a wave of opposition victories. Basescu and the government of Prime Minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu entered office with a robust reform agenda focused on strengthening judicial independence and reducing public sector corruption—critical issues tied to Romania’s planned accession to the European Union in 2007. Though Basescu and his advisors were politically talented, they struggled to create an efficient organizational structure, effective internal communication, and strategic plans with which to foster good day-to-day operations, hands-on crisis management, and effective external communications. President Basescu approached the National Democratic Institute (NDI or the Institute) to assist in building his team’s ability to lead Romania through its democratic and economic transitions.

From June 28, 2005, through May 31, 2006, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs conducted an 11-month program with the goal of improving the organizational and communication skills of presidential staff. The specific objectives of the program were the following:

- To assist the Office of the President to develop an organizational structure that clarifies staff positions and streamlines operations; and
- To enhance the capacity of the staff of the Office of the President in strategic planning, crisis management, and communications.

In February the following objective was added to the program:

- To provide training and consultation to the Office of the Prime Minister on internal and external communications.

¹ The program was originally scheduled to end on February 15, 2006, but a no-cost extension through May 31, 2006, was issued to complete activities.

After conducting a baseline assessment in July 2005, NDI recruited a cadre of high-level consultants from the United States, Canada, and Western Europe to work with the presidential staff. These experts, who included a former Senate chief of staff and a former cabinet minister, conducted workshops on such topics as departmental responsibilities and division of labor, internal communications, crisis management, strategic planning and effective budgeting strategies. Following an information, communications and technology (ICT) assessment, NDI provided technical recommendations to use technology to improve communications within the presidential offices. NDI held sessions for presidential advisors from the communications, policy, and international relations departments on conducting national tours for the president to publicize and interact with citizens across the country about his agenda.

During the program, which leveraged NDI's long-standing relationships with President Basescu and the governing Justice and Truth (*Dreptate și Adevar* or DA) Alliance, NDI trained 6 presidential advisors, 15 advisors to the state and councilors, and staff from all departments of the president's office on establishing new organizational procedures that enhanced the productivity of the Office of the President. The results of NDI's program include the following:

- Using skills learned from NDI, presidential councilors and advisors designed a set of targeted messages and outreach plans to enhance the president's speeches and public appearances.
- Based on best practices for internal communications learned in NDI's seminars, the presidency's staff began to hold weekly meeting and (at times) daily meetings that enabled various departments to coordinate policy and communications with one another and harmonized the president's message.
- In consultation with NDI, presidency staff made a series of changes to the organizational structure of the office with the goal of streamlining communications and defining roles and responsibilities. For example, a scheduler now coordinates the president's meetings and public appearances, and departments have begun to draft budgets for their specific projects.

The skills obtained during this program by presidential staff contributed to improved day-to-day operations, hands-on crisis management, and effective external communications. Though several organizational challenges remain, presidency staff now have a base from which to further develop its operations and thus raise the standard for future presidential administrations in Romania.

II. BACKGROUND

In 2004 Romanian voters responded to the pro-reform platform of the DA Alliance, a coalition formed by the two main opposition parties, the Democratic Party and the National Liberal Party. The Alliance ran its successful parliamentary and presidential campaigns on a reform platform that promised to create judicial independence, strengthen anti-corruption laws, and liberalize and stabilize Romania's growing economy. On November 28, 2004, PD leader Traian Basescu beat expectations to win the presidency, enabling the Alliance to claim the Romanian government as well as a parliamentary majority.

However, lack of government experience and a poor transition with the outgoing administration prevented presidential advisors and the professional staff of the Office of the President from effectively carrying out their advisory, legislative, and political duties. Without solid organizational structure and clear lines of authority among the president's top advisors, the second-tier advisors to the state, and lower-level councilors², the office was poorly positioned to execute long-range strategic plans and to manage day-to-day operations. Key staff positions, such as the national security advisor, remained vacant for several months following the transition, and no chief of staff or other position existed to coordinate the policy and administrative functions of the office.

Internal and external communications also posed a challenge to the new presidency. President Basescu largely relied on impromptu meetings to communicate with the five advisors overseeing domestic policy, international affairs, media relations, legislative affairs, and economic and social affairs. Sporadic communication among advisors led to poorly coordinated policies and ineffective responses to domestic or foreign policy crises. These communication difficulties were exacerbated by a lack of technology, including electronic calendar and document-sharing programs. Public communication was ad hoc in frequency and inconsistent in content. The presidency did not systematically handle constituent correspondence, which had increased dramatically in response to the Alliance's pro-reform campaign promises.

Presidential officials requested NDI's assistance in helping to create an improved organizational structure, streamline operations, and develop staff skills in strategic planning, crisis management, and internal and external communication. The goal of NDI's program was to improve the long-term operations of the Office of the Presidency through technical assistance and training of all three tiers of presidential staff. The specific objectives were the following:

- To assist the Office of the President to develop an organizational structure that clarifies staff positions and streamlines operations; and
- To enhance the capacity of the staff of the Office of the President in strategic planning, crisis management, and communications.

In February 2006, in response to requests for assistance to help the Office of the Prime Minister improve its media relations and public communications, the following objective was added to the program with USAID's approval:

- To provide training and consultation to the Office of the Prime Minister on internal and external communications.

² There are six presidential advisor positions: constitutional and legislative, political, national security, international relations, economic and social, and public relations. Two of these six (national security and international relations) remained vacant throughout the program. Advisors to the state answer to the advisors to the president, and cover the specific topics mentioned above as well as finance and logistics, decorations and decrees, protocol, and human resources. A third tier of staff, known as councilors, provide administrative and policy support to the state advisors.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Upon receiving USAID authorization to begin implementing program activities in July 2005, the Institute developed a roster of international experts on which to call to provide short-term assistance to the presidency. NDI's roster of experts included current and former chiefs of staff, cabinet ministers, communication experts and other high-level executive officials from the U.S., Ireland, Canada, and Germany who agreed to participate in the program (see Attachment One for a full list of trainers). The Institute also utilized its in-house ICT team to assess the technology needs of the presidency. In September, NDI deployed Dr. Sherrie Wolff, an experienced political trainer, as resident advisor to the program.

Needs Assessment

From July 10 through 16, 2005, the Institute conducted a needs assessment of the presidency to guide NDI's support. The assessment team included NDI/Romania Political Party Program Director Nick Demeter, Deputy Minister to the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador Ross Reid, and NDI Program Officer for Governance Programs Amanda Sloat. The assessment team interviewed presidential advisors and key staff through a week-long series of individual meetings to examine overall staffing structure and functions and to determine specific areas of need. At the conclusion of its assessment, NDI provided a report to the Office of the President's staff and USAID (see Attachment Two for an executive summary of the report).

Through its assessment, NDI concluded that President Basescu faced high expectations among citizens despite limited authority granted to his office by the constitution. The president and his staff faced a significant challenge in advancing their agenda and influencing other state institutions. NDI determined that assistance was needed most urgently in the areas of internal and external communications, information sharing, research, strategic planning, and human resource development. The Institute found the presidential advisors to be open and eager to receive NDI's assistance, and the following program to provide expertise was designed:

1. A facilitator with political experience would assist the Office of the President as it developed an overall strategy for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of its long-term goals.
2. A current/former chief of staff would provide guidance as the office developed mechanisms for internal communications and an internal office structure. NDI would consult senior European advisors to gain perspectives on office reorganization in light of other European models. Issues to be addressed included the following: creating a chief of staff position; creating an outreach office; addressing divisions of responsibility; and separating political and administrative functions. NDI consultants would encourage presidential staff to explore low-cost alternatives for public opinion polling and would review the use of Romania's mail system as a means of constituent outreach.

3. NDI would assist the office in creating an external communication and outreach strategy using varied and targeted communication initiatives and in developing a job description for a press secretary or communications director.
4. The Institute's information technology experts would review existing computer systems and recommend appropriate hardware and software options to facilitate efficient information sharing and horizontal communication.
5. NDI would conduct a series of ongoing, short-term training/consultations to assist advisors and staff in addressing such specific and individual needs as time management, public opinion research, briefing documents, speech writing and delivery, crisis management, and budgeting.

Long-term Strategic Planning

As part of the initial assessment process, NDI and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-sponsored a workshop for four presidential counselors and 10 state counselors from July 8 through 10, 2005. NDI led a session on how to reach consensus on the strategic vision of the presidency and how to develop plans to achieve this vision. NDI Consultant Ross Reid guided participants through an exercise to examine their views of the presidential agenda, the opportunities and challenges they face, and the role of advisors and staff in working together to achieve their goals. The workshop also provided an opportunity for advisors and staff of the Office of the President to meet for the first time outside of Bucharest and to discuss their long-term operations and goals.

Internal Communications

In September, NDI Resident Advisor Sherrie Wolff and Reid conducted three-day workshops for presidential advisors and key staff on improving internal communications. NDI advised participants on ways to reorganize communication structures among the various presidency offices. NDI provided examples of forms for the presidential staff to use in requesting meetings with the president to guide staff in creating their own customized forms.

In November, NDI responded to a request by the presidential team for additional workshops on internal communications. NDI Bosnia and Hercegovina Country Director Niamh O'Connor trained 36 participants from all levels of the presidential team on internal communication and media relations and held subsequent meetings with staff to answer further questions. Topics discussed included standardizing communication among staff and with the president through regular briefings and long- and short-term calendars and creating clear communication roles and responsibilities.



Presidential counselor and former leader of the junior coalition partner, the National Liberal Party, Theodor Stolojan, discusses the strategic vision of the presidency at a July 2005 NDI seminar.

Organizational Structure Reform

Improving the Presidential Staff Structure

In September 2005, the Institute assisted presidential staff in reviewing each department and discussing the staff duties and responsibilities in each. NDI proposed a new organizational structure to separate political/policy and administrative functions. NDI assisted staff in creating working groups to address the areas highlighted by the Institute's needs assessment, such as administration, policy coordination, political operation, and communications. In response to staff requests, NDI attended weekly coordination meetings and worked intensively with the working groups as they developed agendas, meeting schedules, and reports.

Throughout the program, NDI worked with presidential advisors, advisors to the state, and councilors to streamline the organizational structure of the office. During three sessions in November that focused on departmental responsibilities and strategic planning, NDI assisted presidential staff in distinguishing administrative tasks from political or policy functions and in developing a list of departmental roles and responsibilities.

In January 2006, the head of the Chancellery departed his position, and scheduling duties were delegated to the president's public relations advisor. Recognizing the need for a separate staff member to coordinate the president's schedule, NDI prepared a sample job description for a presidential scheduler as well as a document template for organized scheduling to be used by the scheduler and advance team in requesting and confirming meetings.

Defining the Role of the Chief of Staff

During its early consultations, NDI encouraged the presidency staff to create a chief of staff position to coordinate communication, policy, and administration of the Office of the President. President Basescu and his advisors were reticent to establish such a position out of concern that it would focus too much authority in the hands of one individual. President Basescu appointed former Prime Minister Theodor Stolojan as chief of staff, but the role was largely ceremonial and ineffective. As with the scheduler position, NDI provided sample job descriptions and organizational charts to Stolojan and Deputy Chief of Staff Claudiu Săftoiu, who was the Institute's main point of contact throughout the program.

In 2006, NDI conducted several consultations with the Office of the President to encourage the creation of a true chief of staff position that would coordinate and streamline communications between the president and his advisors and among the advisors. However, after much deliberation, presidency staff recast the position into two positions: a secretary general to coordinate administrative duties; and a head councilor to coordinate policy and political issues. NDI created a new organizational chart to reflect this change.

In February 2006, the Institute continued consultations to define the two new positions with assistance from NDI Consultant Hans-Achim Roll, chief of staff to former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Roll held individual consultations with councilors and advisors to

address remaining reservations about creating the role of new secretary general and head councilor positions. In addition, NDI held a two-day group session for all 11 councilors to review the new organizational chart and to underscore the importance of the two positions. The discussion also covered such topics as managing crises, working as a team, and cooperating with the president. Follow-up assistance covered guidelines for scheduling meetings for the president and the promotion of efficient internal communications throughout the administration.

Following the presidency's decision to create the new secretary general and head councilor positions, NDI drafted job descriptions in cooperation with staff advisors and councilors. NDI also drafted a new organizational chart (attached to this report as Attachment Three) to illustrate the separation of administrative and political functions and to define the chain of command. NDI presented these new charts to each departmental head, all of whom remained skeptical of the new structure but willing to participate in a trial implementation.

Establishing a Presidential Tour Office

As a result of NDI recommendations, presidency staff agreed to open the Presidential Tour Office to coordinate a series of trips throughout Romania for the president to communicate his national agenda through direct contact with citizens. On March 1, NDI trained eight presidential staff on roles and procedures in the new office. Attendees included state advisors from the communications, political, policy and international relations departments. Topics included setting goals and objectives for the office and determining the organization and structure of the office. NDI stressed the importance of creating partnerships with the communications office, which handles public relations and media; the political office, which is responsible for message definition and interaction with local politicians; and the policy office, which identifies public concerns through polling and community surveys. The seminar also featured a simulation exercise, during which participants chose a specific outreach issue, identified a target audience, budgeted necessary resources, planned a timeline, and arranged logistics, including location, discussion format, and press relation tactics.

External Communication

In October 2005, NDI delivered a seminar for staff on developing and delivering coherent messages to the public. As noted in its assessment report, message development was one of the most critical needs in the Office of the President, as well-researched and formulated messages would guide decisions on the use of President Basescu's time and the focus of his policies. Staff participated in simulations that demonstrated the need to develop a simple, persuasive message that is clear, constant, concise and convincing. Throughout the seminar, NDI emphasized the need to conduct research, such as polling, surveys or questionnaires, to identify the issues of most importance to citizens. NDI trained participants on determining where, when, how and to whom the message should be delivered and in what format.

During the November sessions, Niamh O'Connor discussed external communication skills, including creating and articulating public messages, targeting messages to geographic or special interest groups, writing speeches and press releases, planning and holding press conferences or town hall meetings, preparing photo opportunities, and communicating during

crisis situations. The Institute held follow-up sessions with councilors to discuss methods for better coordinating press events with the president, who tends to engage the press on an ad hoc basis and without first informing his advisors.

Information Technology Development

In an effort to enhance efficiency and to strengthen communication within the Office of the President, NDI conducted an information, communications and technology (ICT) assessment of the presidential offices from October 25 to 31, 2005. NDI ICT Program Officer Neil Laslett met with IT staff, councilors, advisors and staff members of the various presidential offices to discuss existing IT infrastructures and budget limitations. The Institute subsequently provided a list of technical recommendations for using technology to improve communications within the Office of the Presidency. Specific recommendations focused on building a dedicated IT team and implementing office-wide messaging, electronic document storage, and data management systems (see Attachment Four for a complete list of observations and recommendations). The Institute produced and forwarded a translated version of its ICT assessment report to Deputy Chief of Staff Claudiu Săftoiu in January 2006. Throughout the remainder of the program, NDI advised presidency staff and local ICT companies on implementing the Institute's recommendations and improving the presidency's ICT capabilities.

Short-term Training and Consultations

Budgeting Processes

The budget of a public office is drawn up to support clearly outlined objectives; it is thus an integral part of the strategic planning process. In February 2006, NDI held a two-day budget training seminar for the Office of the President and individual consultations with presidential advisors. NDI Consultant Tim Baker led the seminar for two individuals from each of the ten presidency departments responsible for drafting departmental budgets. It provided an opportunity to discuss the relationship between individual departments' objectives and the overall objectives of the Office of the President. NDI held individual consultations with the state advisors for the departments of social and economic policies and finance and logistics.

NDI addressed key shortcomings in the current budget process, including an absence of standardized budget formats and line items across departments, the need to identify and document program objectives, and the lack of budget tracking and projection processes. The Institute provided examples of EU budget procedures and encouraged participants to implement them as Romania comes closer to its January 2007 accession date.

In a budget simulation exercise, participants drafted at least one departmental objective, a specific project in support of that objective in accordance with EU regulations, and recommended guidelines for the ministry of finance and the presidential financial and logistics departments. Following the simulation, participants discussed the political implications of transparent budgeting, the need for public accountability in the expenditure of taxpayer funds, and budget-related EU accession requirements using documents from the office of the EU representative in Bucharest. NDI recommended that the administration coordinate specific

project activities in accordance with the priorities outlined in the president's inaugural speech and strategic plan for 2006.

Public Appearances Seminar

As part of its efforts to streamline the presidency's public communications, in April 2006 NDI conducted a seminar for staff on coordinating public appearances. NDI/Serbia Country Director and public communications expert Michael Lynch discussed the necessary steps for planning a successful public appearance, including coordinating the president's schedule, researching potential sites, and conducting advance work at event sites. Lynch also emphasized the need to compile and disseminate local contact numbers, accommodation information, participant bios, updates on local news, personalities and media, and details on the president's speech or remarks to all staff prior to every event, whether in Bucharest or in remote locations.

Crisis Management

As part of the Institute's final skills building seminar for presidential staff, in May 2006 NDI consultant and crisis management expert James Young conducted a session on improving the presidency's response to natural disasters and other crises that present public relations challenges. Topics were as follows: planning in advance to mitigate crises; creating stronger management structures and building trust in non-crisis periods; defining roles and responsibilities; encouraging political leaders to take an active role in communicating to the public; and enacting proactive, aggressive, and seamless management structures.

Final Seminar

The final seminar of the presidential assistance program was held on May 19 and 20, 2006. Consultants James Young (Canada), Hans-Achim Roll (Germany) and Sherrie Wolff (U.S.) conducted the seminar for 36 councilors, advisors and staff. While the bulk of the seminar took place at Cotroceni Palace, NDI held a separate team-building session away from the parliament building to allow staff to become more acquainted with each other outside of their normal work environment.

Discussions on the second day focused on outstanding issues raised in the course of the program that had not been resolved, including enacting proper budgeting procedures and further defining the chief of staff role within the Office of the President. NDI also asked participants to review the Institute's assistance in the areas of public communication, internal communication, and institutional development. Three groups reviewing each of the three categories met for one hour to discuss their work and then reported back on their recommendations. They were asked to decide on the three most important issues for their respective assistance category, determine how to resolve them, and identify with whom they would need to work, as well as, the resources--material and financial--and timelines required to accomplish the goals.

The institutional needs team identified budgeting as the presidency's most pressing unresolved problem, followed by monitoring and evaluating progress in reorganizing the Office of the President and resolving the outstanding chief of staff issues. The team decided to

temporarily rotate each of the five councilors to serve as chief councilor for a set term and to identify a civil servant to serve as secretary general. The group agreed that this would not be a long-term solution and that it would have to address the flaws in the organizational structure eventually, but it did not want to make drastic changes too quickly.

The internal communications group concluded that the presidency had resolved many of the communications problems by holding weekly meetings and (at times) daily meetings as well as establishing ad hoc, issue-specific meetings with relevant departments. The team agreed that the Office of the President still requires internal communication assistance, but until it is able to implement NDI's recommended information technology changes, it will continue to rely on its current outdated e-mail and paper filing systems.

The public communications team concluded that presidency staff were now able to distinguish a message from an issue and had begun crafting specific public messages. The Tour Office was cited as a significant accomplishment, as it had already started planning a campaign to raise public awareness of EU accession and its importance to Romania.

Assistance to the Office of the Prime Minister

In 2006, after observing the Institute's work with the Office of the President, Oana Marinescu, spokesperson for the prime minister, requested NDI's assistance in reorganizing the prime minister's communications with ministries, including refining and standardizing communication methods among the staff of each ministry.

Effective Policy Communications Workshop

NDI held two workshops in February and March for representatives of each ministry, presenting methods for communicating specific government policies and programs to the media and the public. To ensure that participants had an opportunity to practice new skills, NDI led a simulation in which ministry staff had to craft and deliver policy messages to the media. NDI closed both workshops with a strategic planning exercise that encouraged using proactive methods, such as public opinion polling, focus group research, and public outreach events, to obtain citizen input on policy initiatives and to communicate and promote public policies.

In April, NDI held a similar two-day communication workshop for staff of the Office of the Prime Minister. Participants also participated in simulations, practicing such newly learned communication methods as establishing media contacts, writing press releases, holding press conferences, preparing speeches, dealing with negative press, and coordinating press activities and messages between the prime minister's office and the ministries. On the second day, participants prepared and presented a speech that was filmed and later critiqued by NDI staff and fellow participants.

Public Appearances Seminar

In April 2006, Michael Lynch led a seminar on methods for conducting public appearances for staff of the prime minister's office. Participants learned about preparing for such public appearances as speeches, visits, or tours by the prime minister.

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective 1: To assist the Office of the President to develop an organizational structure that clarifies staff positions and streamlines operations.

- Based on NDI's assessment and recommendations, the Romanian presidency restructured its organization to have one individual – the chief councilor – responsible for coordinating policy, and one individual – the secretary general – responsible for managing administrative duties, streamlining operations and enhancing the efficiency of the Office.
- NDI's assistance facilitated the reorganization of the Office of the President so that advisors perform fewer administrative functions and can instead focus on their more substantive policy or political duties.
- Presidential staff now have better access to the president's schedule and are more aware of his time management needs, in large part due to the following changes recommended by NDI:
 - Based on NDI's assessment and recommendations, the Romanian presidency established a scheduler position within the office of communications; and
 - Based on sample methods for a commonly accessible calendar provided by NDI, the president's schedule is now accessible to councilors and advisors through a group email account.

Objective 2: To enhance the capacity of the staff of the Office of the President in strategic planning, crisis management, and communications.

- Following the joint NDI/UNDP event in July 2005, advisors began holding weekly internal coordination meetings with political and administrative staff. In addition, advisors indicated that the conference gave them the opportunity to build working relationships with each other that led to improved communication and better coordinated policy advice to the president.
- Following NDI's budget processes seminar, a participant from the department of state security drafted a complete project-specific budget according to the outline provided. This budget has served as an example for other department staff as they have created their own budgets.
- Presidential staff instituted regular meetings to share information and make use of systems and tools to facilitate sharing of information among staff and departments, such as the following:
 - The councilors began to hold daily briefings with the president to promote transparency and efficiency, as recommended by NDI.

- Based on internal communications best practices learned in NDI's seminars, the presidency's staff began to hold weekly meetings and *ad hoc* daily meetings that enable various departments to coordinate policy and communications with one another and harmonize the president's message. Brief daily meetings among only the councilors were established in February. Both reforms facilitate a better informed and more communicative staff.
- As a result of the communications workshop facilitated by NDI in September, the presidential advisors created working groups that developed new internal communication systems within their assigned subject areas.
- The Office of the President now communicates with the government and public in a manner that is organized and better reflects its vision and plan. Examples of this result include the following:
 - Based on NDI's seminar on message development and internal communications, the presidential staff worked together for the first time to craft and focus the message in the president's State of the Nation address.
 - Using skills learned from NDI, presidential councilors and advisors drafted targeted messages for the president's public communications on such issues as troop deployment in Iraq and U.S. visa regulations.

Objective 3: To provide training and consultation to the Office of the Prime Minister on internal and external communications.

- As a result of NDI's communication training, the Office of the Prime Minister created a bi-weekly newsletter that features updates from each ministry. Each newsletter is posted on the government's website (www.gov.ro), and is available to government officials and employees as well as to the general public.

V. EVALUATION/CONCLUSIONS

As the first executive assistance program in Romania and one of the few programs of its kind that the Institute has conducted worldwide, this program provided NDI a unique opportunity to apply its existing expertise in a new area. After more than 10 years of political party and civil society assistance in Romania, many of the presidential advisors and staff were former program participants and thus familiar with NDI's mission, staff, and activities. As a result of these existing relationships, staff and advisors felt confident in openly discussing their strengths and weaknesses and were open to implementing such recommendations as hiring new staff, revising organizational charts, and introducing new communication procedures. In addition, because NDI was familiar with participants and their needs, the Institute designed a responsive program that resolved deficiencies in the office organization and communication structures but that would also help staff create structures and standards that could be used in future administrations.

A second factor in NDI's successful implementation of the program was the Institute's wide range of international experts, whose workshops on internal and external communication, crisis management, strategic planning, and organizational reform were the cornerstone of the Institute's program. Short-term training was bolstered by NDI's permanent in-country staff, who maintained regular contact with participants to answer questions, provide informal consultations

or training, or to follow up on assignments or recommendations from the training. Since the close of this program, NDI has continued to regularly check in with participants to discuss progress made since the final training event in May.

Given the program's limited timeframe, NDI spent a relatively large amount of time coordinating training times and locations with participants. This left less time to work with the president's advisors and staff on such longer-term issues as resolving the chief of staff question or restructuring information technology systems, measures that the Institute saw as key to creating a more efficient office. Had the Institute established a more formal commitment with staff and assigned one participant as an NDI liaison at the program's outset, NDI may have spent more time on substantive matters. The program was also hindered in some instances by unforeseen political crises, such as troop deaths in Iraq or natural disasters in Romania that required presidency staff to postpone or cancel training sessions or consultations at the last minute. Finally, the tenuous nature of the governing coalition often translated to the presidency office, which at times resulted in conflicts among staff and unwillingness to compromise on controversial issues.

Although the long-term impact of the program is not yet evident, presidential staff and advisors are now equipped to further improve internal communication and define staff roles and responsibilities. When the presidency is handed over to a new head of state and his/her staff every five years, many of the new practices and procedures will be transferable to new administrations, ensuring continued impact of NDI's program and efficiency of Romanian public offices. In addition to benefiting its Romanian partners, NDI found this program to be a valuable endeavor that could be replicated in other countries with similar needs. Should the opportunity arise in Eastern Europe or other regions to conduct an executive assistance program, NDI will consider this project's strengths and weaknesses as outlined above when designing strategies and activities.

VII. ATTACHMENTS

- **Attachment One: List of Participating NDI International Trainers**
- **Attachment Two: NDI June 2005 Assessment Executive Summary**
- **Attachment Three: Revised Organizational Chart, updated February 2006**
- **Attachment Four: NDI October 2005 ICT Assessment Executive Summary**

ATTACHMENT ONE: LIST OF PARTICIPATING NDI INTERNATIONAL TRAINERS



- Ø Tim Baker, United States, former NDI Resident Representative for Kosovo and Iraq
- Ø Nicholas Demeter, United States, NDI Romania Country Director
- Ø Neil Laslett, United States, NDI Information and Communications Technology Program Officer
- Ø Michael Lynch, United States, NDI Serbia Country Director
- Ø Niamh O'Connor, Ireland, NDI Bosnia Country Director
- Ø Ross Reid, Canada, Deputy Minister to the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Ø Hans-Achim Roll, Germany, Chief of Staff to former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl
- Ø Amanda Sloat, United States, NDI Program Officer for Governance Programs
- Ø Sherrie Wolff, United States, NDI Resident Advisor
- Ø James Young, Canada, Special Advisor to the Deputy Minister for Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

ATTACHMENT TWO: NDI JUNE 2005 ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Romania: Support to the Office of the President Assessment Report Summary

Upon receiving a new grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) conducted a needs-assessment of the Romanian presidency to guide future NDI support. The assessment was conducted in July 2005 and included a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) cosponsored weekend conference for 4 presidential counselors and 10 state counselors followed by a week-long series of individual meetings with these same presidential advisors. The assessment team included NDI/Romania Political Party Program Director Nick Demeter, Deputy Minister to the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador Ross Reid, and NDI Program Officer for Governance Programs Amanda Sloat.

General Findings

President Traian Basescu is the leading politician in Romania, but also faces unreasonably high expectations of citizens as the source of solutions to all their problems and despite limited authority granted to him in the constitution. The president and his staff face a significant challenge to further the agenda of the presidency and influence other state institutions. The presidency is under-funded, few have any government experience, but recognize the need for better systems to ensure the president gets the best advice available in a timely and useful manner in order to meet the challenges ahead.

- *Internal Communication:* Lack of internal communication is perhaps the biggest challenge facing the presidency. The NDI/UNDP conference was the first time presidential advisors had met as a group and believe the session was extremely useful for fostering relationships, dialogue, and better working practices. Subsequently, advisors agreed to hold weekly coordination meetings. Advisors indicate that their working relationship has improved following the retreat and consensus precedes advice to the president. Lack of horizontal communication affects the quality of information and advice and lead to inconsistency in scheduling, briefings, and issue management as well as duplication of efforts.
- *Information Sharing:* There is a need for a standardized approach to producing, storing and sharing information. There is presently no shared access to the president's calendar, though there are plans to develop an intranet. A shared file storage system would be valuable.
- *Research:* Research capacity could be developed. Shared press information and research would help the work of departments. The press office wants to increase analysis, but lacks resources.

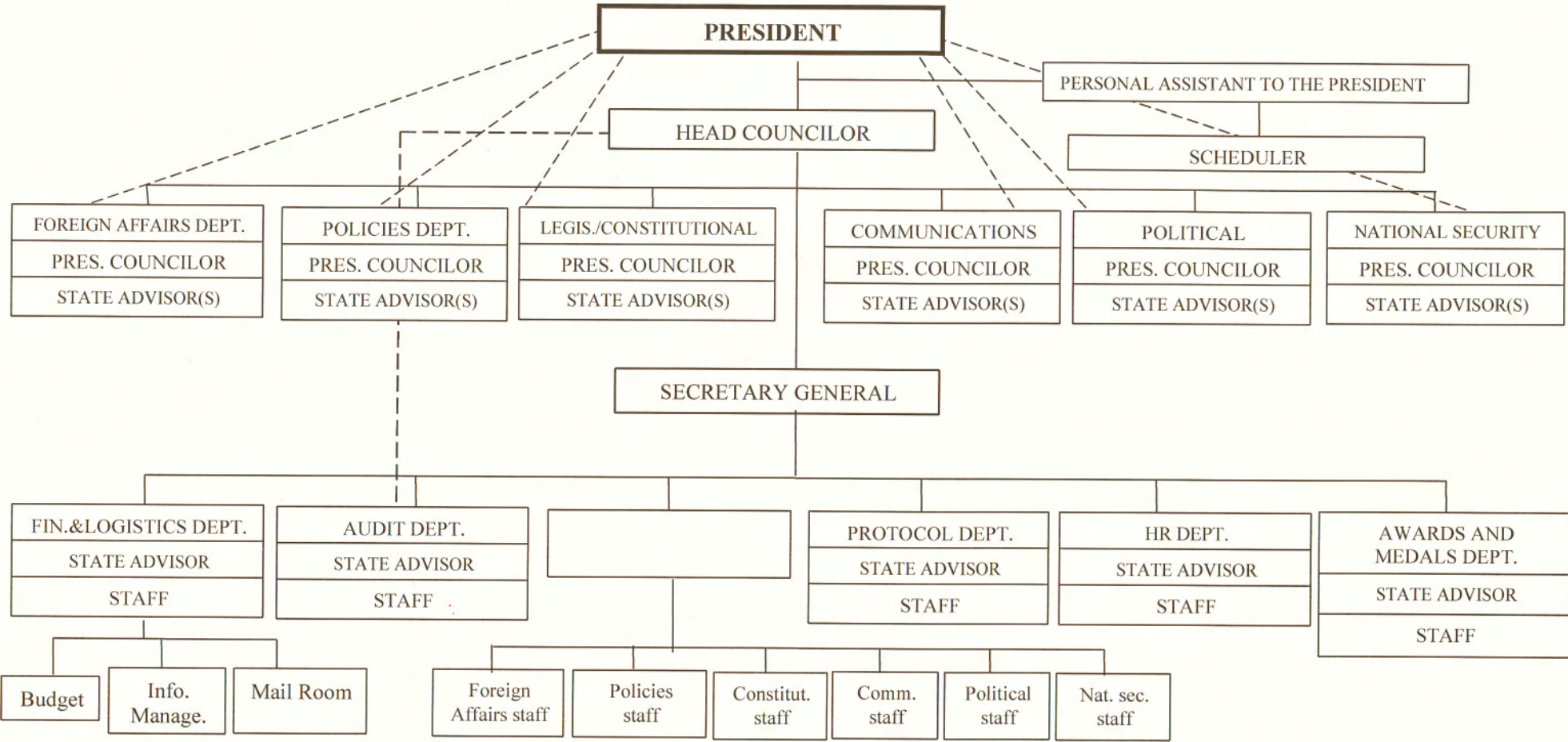
- *External Communications:* Relations with the media could be more focused, including consistent messaging and better-controlled events. At the same time, there is an opportunity to increase dialogue with citizens through events such as televised roundtables, town hall meetings, meetings with targeted and influential groups and "tours" or regional travel. The president has received more than 25,000 pieces of mail in the first six months of 2005, more than the previous presidency received in a year; there is significant opportunity here.
- *Strategic Planning:* Advisors have a clear understanding of and dedication to long-term objectives, but need assistance in implementing, monitoring and evaluating them.
- *Human Resources:* The lack of a chief of staff is an obvious and well recognized need, though some advisors fear losing access to the president in appointing one; this issue has the potential to be controversial. Some staff are left over from the previous administration while budgetary constraints complicate efforts to hire new staff.
- *Structure:* The staffing structure could be more efficient. Six presidential advisors and five other advisors all report directly to the president. There is a confusing mix of political and administrative functions and inefficient operation of administrative support.
- *Process:* Procedures for governing how staff relate to one another, the president and the public could be improved and standardized.
- *Infrastructure:* The physical quarters of the presidency present challenges for practical and efficient workspace. Advisors lack necessary computers and software and other supplies.

Recommendations

There is significant buy-in from presidential advisors for receiving NDI assistance. NDI recommends drawing on the expertise of advisors in similar roles, especially from European countries given the aim of European enlargement and the similarities in political systems. NDI recommends the following:

1. A current/former chief of staff to provide consultations on developing internal communications, external communications, and office structure.
 - Senior advisors should be consulted on options for office reorganization looking at other European models. Issues to be addressed include: developing a chief of staff, creating an outreach office, addressing divisions of responsibility, and separating political and administrative functions.
 - While public opinion polling is expensive, it is a vital tool for public policy development. Low-cost alternatives should be explored.
 - The mail system should be reviewed and explored as a means of constituent outreach.
2. A facilitator with political experience could help in developing strategies with the presidency. This could include an overall strategy for reinforcing long-term goals in the actions and communication of the presidency and systems for monitoring and evaluating pursuit of long-term goals.

3. A press secretary or communications director could help to develop a strategy for external communications and outreach using varied and targeted communication initiatives.
4. An information technology expert could help review existing computer systems and recommend appropriate hardware and software options to facilitate efficient information sharing and horizontal communication.
5. A series of ongoing, short-term trainings/consultations can help advisors and staff to address specific and individual needs such as: time management, public opinion research, producing briefing documents, speech writing and delivery, crisis management, and budgeting.



ATTACHMENT FOUR: NDI OCTOBER 2005 ICT ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



NDI Romania Support to the Office of the President Information and Communications Technology Assessment October 25-31, 2005

Executive Summary

In October 2005, NDI conducted a needs assessment and evaluation of the current Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources at the Romanian Presidency facilities located at Cotroceni Palace in Bucharest. This ICT assessment was part of a larger technical assistance program, and follows a general needs assessment conducted by NDI in July 2005. The earlier assessment indicated that the Presidency staff lacked sufficient ICT resources and faced considerable difficulty with both internal and external communications. The subsequent ICT assessment looked in more detail at existing communication and information management systems, their effectiveness and usefulness in meeting the current needs of the Presidency staff, and how these systems could be improved, from both a technical and structural perspective. The aim of the assessment was to provide concrete technical recommendations alongside strategic guidance in the use of ICT to improve communication within the Presidency. Meetings with both general staff and senior advisors were held October 25-31 at Cotroceni palace. Meetings were held with most major departments, with the noted exceptions of the Chancellery and Communications, which were unavailable due to internal staff changes and scheduling conflicts.

The following observations and recommendations are discussed in this report:

1. The IT department currently consists of two people, one of whom has been reassigned to the National Security department. This is insufficient to adequately plan for and manage the IT needs of the institution and support the needs of a large and complex office that includes over 130 networked computers and printers. Support issues cannot be resolved in a reasonable timeframe, and users often feel the need to take IT matters into their own hands. There is a high level of frustration and dissatisfaction with the current level of user support. Building an adequate IT department that is able to provide strategic planning and management of overall information systems as well as excellent technical services to staff is of paramount importance.
2. There is no standard office-wide messaging system. Email is provided off-site by the state-run telecommunications agency, but users often experience problems with the system, especially with large file attachments. The system does not provide any additional features such as shared calendars or a user directory. Because of this, users rely on external services such as MSN and Yahoo

Messenger that raise security concerns and may be blocked in the future. Although planned network upgrades will improve email availability, users will still require an integrated messaging system to effectively communicate and share information.

3. There is a strong need both within and between departments to share electronic documents. Currently, no centralized file sharing system exists, and users are often frustrated by their inability to easily access shared files and common information. In some cases, users have created shared folders on their desktop computers, but this is an insufficient solution. A centralized file server – with the appropriate user permissions and backups – is essential to manage the large amount of data handled by Presidency staff.
4. Paper documents remain a necessity in several areas. Currently, these documents are physically routed between offices using an antiquated ledger system and stored in decentralized archives. In some cases, issues requiring collaboration between two or more departments have led to confusion over roles and responsibilities. An electronic document management system would improve document handling and routing by providing centralized document management, improved inter-department collaboration, and more efficient use of staff time.
5. Many departments generate or collect large amounts of data that must be organized and shared. Staff expressed a desire for tools to help them manage this information, ranging from news clippings to event planning to vendor registries. In most cases, these tools would take the form of intranet database applications. Several such applications are already in use in the office, and more would be welcomed. There is considerable technical expertise available within Romania to develop these types of systems.
6. The mail handling system has been improved since January but still relies on custom responses to most letters. Sometimes, these letters go all the way to senior advisors and responding can consume significant staff time. A standardized response system, using pre-approved responses to common questions, could save significant time. This is true for both constituent mail and mail received through the Chancellery.